REMARKS

Status of the Claims

Claims 1-14 are currently pending in the application. Claims 1-13 stand rejected. Claims 1, 6 and 8 have been amended as set forth herein. All amendments are made without prejudice or disclaimer. New claim 14 has been added. No new matter has been added by way of the present amendments. Specifically, amendment to claim 1 concerning pH is supported by the specification at page 11, last paragraph, lines 1-2. The remaining changes to claim 1 are merely to improve the form thereof. The amendments regarding mixtures of oxidizers is supported by the specification of page 15, second paragraph. New claim 14 is supported by the as-filed claims, specifically claim 8. Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

Claim 8 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. (*See*, Office Action of December 12, 2005, at page 2, hereinafter referred to as "Office Action"). Applicants traverse the rejection as set forth herein.

The Examiner states that the word "preferably" recited in claim 8 is indefinite. To expedite prosecution, claim 8 has been amended to remove the word "preferably." The phrase following the word "preferably" has been removed to a dependent claim, new claim 14.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the indefiniteness rejection of claim 8 are respectfully requested.

Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1-13 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jokinen,

U.S. Patent No. 5,888,404 (hereinafter referred to as "Jokinen") in view of Weissenberg et al.,

U.S. Patent No. 6,368,511 (hereinafter referred to as "Weissenberg et al.") and Blais et al., U.S.

Patent No. 6,855,256 (hereinafter referred to as "Blais et al."). (See, Id.). Applicants traverse the

rejection as hereinafter set forth.

The Examiner states that Jokinen discloses a method of treating sludge substantially as

claimed in the present application. (Id.). The Examiner further states that Weissenberg et al.

disclose the use of Fenton reagent to aid in reducing odor and that dewatering sludge is known in

the art. (Id.). The Examiner also states that Blais et al. disclose the use of a centrifuge to

dewater sludge. (Id. at page 3). The Examiner also states that the "specific pH, time period,

molar ratio, amount, and solids content utilized, would have been an obvious matter of process

optimization to one skilled in the art, depending on the specific sludge treated and results

desired." (Id. at pages 2-3).

Jokinen

Jokinen discloses acid treatment of sludge to dissolve metal and phosphorous. In

Jokinen, the sludge may be oxidized with hydrogen peroxide to form Fe(III). (See, Jokinen,

abstract and at column 4, line 52). Jokinen discloses precipitation with phosphorous to yield

ferric phosphate for the specific purpose of recovering ferric phosphate from the sludge. (Id. at

column 4, line 65 to column 5, line 8). This precipitate is then further processed by Jokinen to

produce a ferric coagulant and a phosphate product, wherein said "very pure" phosphate may be

RCS/TJS/py

6

Reply to Office Action of December 12, 2005

used as a raw material for, for instance, production of detergents. (Id. at column 5, lines 31 to

42). Thus, in contrast to the present invention, ferric phosphate is not present at the final

dewatering stage of the sludge according to the method of Jokinen, i.e., the final filtrate water

returned to be recycled does not contain any ferric phosphate. (Id. at column 5, lines 13-18 and

lines 31-42).

In contrast, ferric phosphate and its presence at the dewatering stage is critical to the

present invention because the ferric phosphate, among other factors, provides the ability to

achieve superior dewatering results compared to the results previously achieved in the art.

The Examiner states that the only difference between the present claims and the claims of

Jokinen is that a Fenton's reaction is used "to form trivalent iron and free radicals to precipitate

trivalent iron phosphate, and produce a deodorization and sanitation effect." Thus, even the

Examiner admits that Jokinen cannot form the basis of a prima facie case of obviousness because

Jokinen does not recite each and every element of the presently claimed invention, as is required

by law. (See, Office Action, at page 2, and In re Vaeck, 947 F.2d 488, 20 U.S.P.Q.2d 1438 (Fed.

Cir. 1991), MPEP § 706.02(j)). However, these are not the only differences between the

disclosure of Jokinen and the presently claimed invention.

The process disclosed by Jokinen is motivated by the desire to recover metal and

phosphorous and to discharge heavy metals. Thus, one of ordinary skill in the art might consider

the disclosure of Jokinen to determine how to isolate and purify heavy metals and phosphates

from wastewater, but not for the purpose of determining how to efficiently and effectively

dewater sludge and deodorize sludge. That is, the present invention is directed to treating sludge

containing organic matter, not to recovering metals and phosphorous from wastewater.

Docket No.: 0104-0476PUS1

Additionally, it appears that in the process of Jokinen, the sludge from the wastewater treatment

plant already has been acid-treated one time to separate the organic sludge from the metal sludge.

(Id. at abstract, "said wastewater is acidified to dissolve metals contained in the sludge," etc.).

However, in contrast, this preliminary step is not required in the presently claimed invention.

According to the presently claimed invention, there is no separation of the wastes. Thus, for at

least these reasons, the sludge in Jokinen, which is simply a byproduct, removed and discarded,

is not even comparable to the sludge according to the present invention, which after processing is

deodorized and sanitized.

More particularly, the disclosure of Jokinen separates the sludge at different stages and

recovers ferric phosphates from the metal sludge. Thus, one of ordinary skill in the art, in

possession of the disclosure of Jokinen, cannot derive the dewatered sludge achieved through the

presently claimed invention having the same high solids content. Furthermore, deodorization

and sanitation effects according to the present invention could not be achieved considering only

the teachings of Jokinen because the process disclosed by Jokinen is different from the process

disclosed by the present invention and because Jokinen is motivated to achieve different results,

directed at the wastewater, not the sludge, from those achievable in light of the present

disclosure.

Thus, the teachings of Jokinen are unrelated to those of the present invention and, in fact,

teach away from the present invention because Jokinen is directed to achieving an unrelated

goal, that is, isolation and purification of phosphates and heavy metals from wastewater.

Furthermore, there is no motivation found within Jokinen to so drastically modify the teachings

RCS/TJS/pv

8

of Jokinen to achieve the beneficial results of the presently claimed invention. (See, In re Vaeck,

947 F.2d 488, 20 U.S.P.Q.2d 1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991)).

Weissenberg et al.

The Examiner cites to the secondary reference of Weissenberg et al. for the proposition

that it is known in the art to use the Fenton reaction. (See, Office Action at page 2).

disclosure of Weissenberg et al. is directed to improving dewatering of sludge. (See,

Weissenberg et al., abstract). Weissenberg et al. acid treat sludge at a pH of less than 5.0. (Id. at

column 6, lines 17-35). The sludge is also oxidized with hydrogen peroxide and iron, according

to Weissenberg et al. (Id. at column 6, lines 44-63). After these processes, the sludge is made

more alkaline by increasing the pH with earth metals to yield a limed sewage at pH 9-11. (Id. at

column 7, lines 1-9).

Thus, Weissenberg et al. require a high pH "to from 9 to 11" before dewatering. (Id. at

column 7, line 2). This is in marked contrast to the presently claimed invention, which requires a

high pH "of at most 7.0" before dewatering, as recited in claim 1. Weissenberg et al. discloses a

process wherein the use of calcium hydroxide is critical to the invention to increase the pH of the

sludge. (Id.). Without addition of calcium hydroxide, the dewatering results of the Weissenberg

et al. process could not be achieved. In contrast, the present invention does not require the use of

calcium hydroxide to achieve the beneficial results of high dewatering. In fact, the presently

claimed invention requires the opposite of the teachings of Weissenberg et al. by requiring a low

pH, less than 7.0. The Weissenberg et al. invention is directed to a process whereby the pH is

increased for the purpose of rebinding heavy metals that have been dissolved in the previous

Docket No.: 0104-0476PUS1

acidic environment. In contrast to Weissenberg et al., the process of the presently claimed

invention does not rebind heavy metals in the sludge. Thus, Weissenberg et al. clearly also

teaches away from the presently claimed invention, as recited in claim 1.

Furthermore, the process disclosed by Weissenberg et al. does not disclose a method of

controlling phosphorous. Weissenberg et al. do not disclose the formation of a ferric phosphate,

or the important ratio between Fe and P, as disclosed in the presently claimed invention.

Weissenberg et al. further do not even disclose how these elements, important to the presently

claimed invention, effects the sludge. Additionally, the process of the presently claimed

invention does not require calcium hydroxide or a high pH to achieve extensive dewatering,

deodorizing and sanitation effects.

Thus, the disclosure of Weissenberg et al. do not cure the defects of the disclosure of

Jokinen. Furthermore, the disclosure of Weissenberg et al. actually teaches away from the

present invention due to the marked differences in methods. Additionally, there is no motivation

found within the disclosures or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in

the art, to modify or combine this reference with that of Jokinen to achieve the superior results of

the presently claimed invention. (See, In re Vaeck, 947 F.2d 488, 20 U.S.P.Q.2d 1438 (Fed. Cir.

1991)).

Blais et al.

The Examiner cites an additional secondary reference of Blais et al. for the general

blanket statement that "it is known in the art to utilize acid, hydrogen peroxide, and ferric iron to

aid decreasing odor, destroying pathogenic organisms, and dewatering sludge." (See, Office

10

RCS/TJS/py

Action, at page 2). However, even the additional secondary reference of Blais et al. cannot cure

the defects still present in the prior two references and the Examiner somewhat overstates the

disclosure of Blais et al. The method disclosed by Blais et al. requires acid treatment and

oxidization to remove heavy metals and destroy pathogens. (See, Blais et al. at abstract). The

Blais et al. method is a hybrid method that combines biological activity with chemical reactions.

(Id.). In contrast, the presently claimed invention is not directed to removing heavy metals, as in

Blais et al. Blais et al. further require a coagulation agent. (Id. at Figure 1, "coagulation aid").

Furthermore, Blais et al. require the use of ferrous sulphate to achieve the results of the process.

(Id.). The ferrous sulphate is directed at treating the bacterial flora in the sludge and is converted

to ferric sulphate, which then acts as an oxidizing agent. (*Id.* at column 6, lines 54-59, column 7,

lines 101-5 and Figure 2). Thus, ferrous material is converted to ferric by the action of the

bacteria present in the sludge (or added to the sludge). The ferric material is then utilized as an

oxidizing agent. Thus, the ferrous material in Blais et al. does not undergo the same type of

transformation achieved in the presently claimed invention due to the presence of these bacteria.

Additionally, the process disclosed by Blais et al. requires a pH above 2 to avoid

undesirable dissolution or degradation of fertilizing elements. (*Id.* at column 7, lines 23-28).

Also, the process of Blais et al. does not alter the composition of fertilizing agents present in the

sludge, in contrast to the process according to the presently claimed invention. Blais et al. also

do not disclose the use of ferric phosphate to improve dewatering or the important ratio between

Fe and P in the sludge.

Thus, none of the references, individually or in combination, recite all of the elements of

the presently claimed invention. Therefore, the cited references, even in combination, cannot

Docket No.: 0104-0476PUS1

form the basis of a prima facie case of obviousness. (In re Vaeck, 947 F.2d 488, 20 U.S.P.Q.2d

1438 (Fed. Cir. 1991), MPEP § 706.02 (j)).

Dependent claims 2-13 are non-obvious, inter alia, as depending from a non-obvious

base claim, claim 1.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the obviousness rejection of claims 1-13 are

respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any questions or comments, please contact Thomas J. Siepmann,

Ph.D., Registration No 57,374 at the offices of Birch, Stewart, Kolasch & Birch, LLP.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future

replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for

any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under § 1.17; particularly, extension of

time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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